

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending August 21, 2010

Bonaire – Constitutional Referendum Postponed Indefinitely

Bonaire's Constitutional referendum was postponed, by the Island Council, until further notice. The Bonaire Referendum Committee needed more time to organize the referendum and had asked the Bonaire Island Government to postpone it. Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, the so-called BES islands, have decided to join the continental Netherlands as public entities, but the current Bonaire Island government has criticized the process and the Dutch influence. They believe that Bonaire must obtain the same rights as a current municipality of the Netherlands and wanted the people to decide their future in a referendum. The Netherlands Antilles dismantling process and the new Bonaire status within the Dutch Kingdom are supposed to continue as planned. (Various media)

Curacao – Tourism at Airport Declines; U.S. Market Up

658,966 passengers arrived, departed, or transited at Hato International Airport during the first six months of 2010 compared to 708,203 passengers (-6.9%) over the same period last year. Arrivals and/or transits from the U.S. increased by 38.9% compared to the same period last year. (Various media)

Curacao\Bonaire – Fuel Shortage Imminent?

A fuel shortage on Curaçao and Bonaire is imminent. Despite Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA contractual obligations, Isla refinery management announced last week there is limited fuel in stock and no fuel is produced locally, because the Isla refinery is practically shut down since March 1. The Curacao Government and other companies involved are looking for solutions. (Various media)

Bonaire – U.S. Based-DEMA Provides U.S. Dive Tourism Data

Tom Ingram, Executive Director of San Diego-based DEMA (Diving Equipment and Marketing Association) was recently on Bonaire where he gave a presentation about dive tourism.

Nearly 30,000 Bonaire visitors participated in a survey that helped identify the geo-demographic segmentation of many U.S. dive tourists. The gathered data is important, because it provides an improved understanding of Bonaire's current visitors, and services can be better targeted to meet the needs of the diving consumer. The database is updated yearly.

DEMA continues to provide this type of information to the island as a benefit of Bonaire's destination sponsorship of the DEMA/Be a Diver Pool which is a 20 x 30 foot, 15,000 gallon mobile pool which traverses the U.S. stopping at two- and three-day, large-scale venues. It is complete with a portable setup that includes dressing rooms, towels, all the newest diving equipment including wetsuits and fins, an air compressor, and a pavilion for registration and consumer interaction. (Bonaire Insider reporter)

St. Maarten – Island Government Elections on September 17

St. Maarten Island Government elections will be held on September 17, 2010. Elections are necessary as part of the Netherlands Antilles dismantling process. St. Maarten is scheduled to become a semi-autonomous entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 10-10-10. (Daily Herald)

Curacao\Bonaire – Jet Fuel Shortage Solution Sought

A fuel shortage on Curaçao and Bonaire is not imminent, despite media reports yesterday, according to an Isla refinery spokesperson. A previous message by Isla Refinery management was reportedly misunderstood. There is sufficient fuel in stock to support the local market; only the jet fuel stock needs to be replenished, the spokesperson said. The Curacao Government and other companies involved are looking for solutions. (Various media)

Aruba – Government Tightens Money Laundering Legislation

Aruban law requires that any amount of money in excess of US \$11,000 should be declared at the Customs Department before leaving the island, and there must be full verification of the origin of the money. The government recently announced that travelers carrying checks, gift cards, and other goods that could be converted easily to cash worth more than US \$11,000 are also obliged to declare their possessions at Customs as of July 1, 2010. Credit cards and PIN-cards are exempted from the new legislation. More information can be found on the Custom Service (SIAD, Servicio di Impuesto y Servicio di Aduana) website at www.SIAD.aw (Various media)

Antilles – Joint Court of Justice Launches New Website

The Joint Court of Justice of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba has launched a new website. The Court is responsible for the administration of justice in first instance and in appeal in the islands of the Netherlands Antilles and in Aruba. The Joint Court of Justice consists of a presiding judge and the other members and their substitutes. The members of the Joint Court of Justice deal, in first instance and in appeal, with civil cases, criminal cases, and cases of administrative law (among others, tax law). <http://www.gemhofvanjustitie.org/?lang=en> (Various media)

Antilles\Aruba - FBI Provides Crisis Negotiating Training for Law Enforcement Officials

Three U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) instructors have provided a five-day crisis negotiation training for law enforcement personnel from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (NA&A) August 9-13, 2010 at the Curacao Breezes Hotel. The training was presented under the invitation of Curacao Police Commissioner Carlos Casseres who contacted the FBI Legal Attaché's office in Bridgetown, Barbados with the request to provide training. The training consisted of classes, case studies, equipment proficiency, scenario based training, negotiation tactics, and was used to provide updates on the latest developments in the field.

The Crisis Negotiations Units in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba are responsible for responding to incidents that require officers trained in crisis intervention and negotiation techniques. Officers from all NA&A police organizations, Royal Dutch Marechaussee, Special Taskforce NA&A (RST), Public Prosecutor's Office, Customs NA, Bon Futuro Prison, and the Control and Security Services (SKS) participated in the training. The training was an excellent opportunity to strengthen the strong relationship between the FBI and the various law enforcement authorities on the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. (Various media)

Curacao - USS Klakring Visits Curacao and Provides Community Support

USS Klakring (FFG 42) will conduct a port visit in Curacao for several days in August during its Operation Southern Seas deployment. The port visit will provide Klakring sailors the opportunity to experience the rich Curacao culture and to serve as goodwill ambassadors in Curacao. During their stay, Klakring's sailors will participate in a community relations project as a means to build relationships and mutual understanding with the local community.

Southern Seas 2010, a United States Southern Command directed operation, focuses on enhancing relationships with regional partner nations and improving operational readiness for all assigned units. Southern Seas provides the opportunity for U.S. and other forces to operate in the multinational environment, refine coordination, improve interoperability, and demonstrate flexibility. In addition, assigned units will focus on unconventional threats such as illicit trafficking, and improving training levels in a variety of mission areas. (Various media)

Antilles\Aruba - Introduction of ESTA Registration Fee

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will introduce a fee for Electronic System of Travel Authorization (ESTA) beginning September 8. DHS has had the discretion to charge a fee to cover the costs of administering the program since ESTA was implemented.

The fee is comprised of two parts:

- Processing Charge - all applicants requesting an electronic travel authorization are charged \$4 for the processing of the application.
- Charge determined by Travel Promotion Act (TPA) - if your application is approved and you receive authorization to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, an additional \$10 will be charged to the credit card. If the electronic travel authorization is denied, only the application processing fee will be charged.

The fee must be paid by credit card at the time of enrollment at www.pay.gov. Some debit cards may be used for payment but only if they do not require a numerical PIN. Pay.Gov uses advanced encryption to protect transactions while applicants are logged in. When accessing a profile, any account numbers applicants have entered will be masked on the screen. DHS is exploring the possibility of adding other payment methods in the future. Existing ESTA registrations remain valid for travel through their expiration date or until the passport expiration date if it expires sooner.

DHS also announced the elimination of the paper arrival/departure form (Form I-94W) for authorized travelers from nations participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which includes citizens with a passport issued by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. All travelers seeking entry to the U.S. with valid visas still have to complete Form I-94

Arrival/Departure Record. All travelers (travelling both on ESTA registration and on visas) still have to fill the customs declaration. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Four Political Parties Vie For 15 Seats in Parliament

Four political parties are vying for all seats (15) in the first St. Maarten parliament after dissolution. St. Maarten is scheduled to become a semi-autonomous entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 10-10-10.

The United People's (UP) party, Democratic Party (DP), Concordia Political Alliance (CPA) and National Alliance (NA). DP and NA are on the ballot, but UP and CPA need 134 signatures to qualify for the September 17 elections.

It is expected that the new UP party of former DP Commissioner Theo Heyliger is going to compete with the ruling NA party of William Marlin and the opposition DP party of Sarah Wescott-Williams. (Various media)

Antilles – Court Case Against International Drugs Gang Postponed

The Court Case against five persons, who were arrested on May 5, was postponed until September 22. The men were taken into custody after an intense narcotics investigation that spanned at least seven islands and countries in the region. Several agencies from the Netherlands Antilles, U.S., South America and other countries contributed to the arrests. Two businessmen were arrested in Philipsburg and Simpson Bay. Investigations reached as far as Colombia, Venezuela, Dominica, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Also, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Dutch Royal Marechaussee were involved. The Police Arrest Team caught one suspect with a loaded firearm in St. Maarten and 179 kilograms of cocaine were seized from one suspect's house. Also, one of the key suspects is allegedly involved in the David Mercedes Mejia money laundering case. (Daily Herald)

St. Maarten - Man Sentenced to Three Months for Money Laundering

David Mercedes Mejia was sentenced to a three month prison sentence for money laundering. Mercedes Mejia carried US \$ 183,000 in his backpack when he was arrested on a boat by the Netherlands Antilles Coast Guard. The man said he was approached by "El Gordo", a Spanish-speaking man in Tortola, with the request to take the money to a certain hotel, where he would be contacted by a "local person" in St. Maarten for a \$4,000 fee.

The boat was intercepted by Coast Guard officials who found a hidden compartment and traces of heroin and cocaine in the boat. Also, the prosecutor said that three men in diving suits had tried to steal the impounded boat. (Daily Herald)

Curacao- PM De Jongh-Elhage: "Petrobras Wants To Do Business"

Brazilian state-owned Oil Company Petrobras representatives met with Netherlands Antilles PM Emily de Jongh-Elhage to discuss future business opportunities. The PM said after the meeting that Petrobras wants to do business on Curacao and is interested in supplying asphalt to the market. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime August 13 – 19

On August 16, vehicle occupants fired several shots at a house in Otrobanda. The motive for the shooting was not known. On August 18, a man seated on his porch in Cerito was shot and killed by the occupants of a passing vehicle. The motive is not known (Extra, Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad).

ARUBA

Crime August 13 – 19

On August 13, a woman standing at a busstop in Oranjestad was robbed by two men. On August 17, A Chinese supermarket in Tanki Leendert was robbed by a gunman (Diario Aruba, Bon Dia Aruba).

"The Weekly Press Summary is a compilation of stories running in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruban press that is intended to alert readers about items of interest to them. There is no interpretation or verification of the facts contained therein."